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The Monthly Minute

with State Senator John Pappageorge

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Budget may be in place but work not finished

Dear Friend:

The six remaining budgets the Legislature sent to the governor were signed into law on October 30th. While this means the constitutional requirement to have a balanced budget in place has been met, there is still a long way to go.

One of the biggest issues left unresolved is school funding. The governor's decision to veto \$52 million in 20j funding and require an additional \$127 per pupil pro-rata reduction to all schools does not accurately reflect the budget situation. In what can only be viewed as a move to force tax increases, the governor immediately slashed education funding and called on legislative leaders to pass tax increases in order to avoid cuts.

With regard to 20j funding, I have been clear in my opposition to the governor's veto. I sponsored Senate Resolution (SR) 88 to encourage the House to override the harmful cuts that would result. I am looking at all options to restore this critical funding. [Click here](#) to read more about SR 88. The fact is there was no need to veto 20j funding. The Senate had passed tax expenditure legislation that covered all of k-12 funding. The House refused to forward it. All the governor had to do is go to the House and say, "you forgot to send the money."

Rather than pass piecemeal tax increases, however, I am supporting real reforms that will not place a further tax burden on already struggling Michigan families. I am committed to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to find a responsible solution to minimizing the deep cuts to schools.

In addition to education funding, painful cuts were made to critical programs such as local revenue sharing, Medicaid provider rates and the Michigan Promise Grant. It is clear that there are serious structural problems facing Michigan that have resulted in continuous budget deficits for some time now.

To be clear, I don't believe that simply slashing spending is the end solution. On the other hand, knee-jerk tax increases for one-time fixes is not an option. The work isn't over. My colleagues and I are looking at all areas of government for ways to implement long-lasting positive reforms that will allow us to rein in government spending while still providing the revenues needed to maintain critical services.

I receive dozens of phone calls, e-mails and letters on a daily basis with recommendations for reform. I am paying attention. I am taking all ideas into consideration in an effort to evaluate how to put taxpayer dollars to the highest use possible.

Just recently I was able to usher through legislation in the Senate that will allow the Oakland County Circuit Court to achieve cost-savings through the temporary elimination of one judgeship. This is a common-sense measure that saves the locals money without compromising services. I discussed this in more detail in a recent press release which can be [viewed here](#). This is just a small example of what can be accomplished in government when we work together.

Sincerely,


John Pappageorge

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Senate approves independent business ombudsman bills

Legislation creating an office of independent business ombudsman in Michigan was recently approved by the Michigan Senate. mate is ranked by businesses as the second most important location decision, just after workforce training.

The Senate Republican bills would create the position to assist job providers in dealing with regulatory agencies and help ensure a fair and effective regulatory environment.

Creation of a truly independent business ombudsman will send a message to job providers that Michigan is open for business. Decreasing Michigan's red tape is critical to attracting companies to locate here. An ombudsman will help achieve that goal.



Senate Bills 2 and 340 would create the office of business ombudsman within the Michigan Strategic Fund. The ombudsman would be appointed by the governor with the advice and consent of the Senate, and the position would be empowered to investigate and review the actions of regulatory agencies.

Agencies would be required to disclose what actions they have taken in response to the ombudsman's recommendations or the reasons for not complying.

According to Site Selection magazine, regulatory cli-

Michigan keeps wetlands protection control, with reforms

Senate Republican legislation that will keep Michigan's wetlands protection program under state control instead of the federal government was recently signed by the governor.

Public Act 120 of 2009, formerly Senate Bill 785, enacts key changes in the wetlands program to make the regulatory process more efficient and effective.

PA 120 reforms the state's wetlands protection program to maintain its operation under the state's control, streamline the permitting process and rely more on the use of general and minor permits instead of individual permits.

Under the act, the wetlands protection program:

- Retains the integrated permitting system;
- Uses a new funding source that does not involve fees or dollars from the General Fund;
- Adopts many of the federal guidelines and standards;
- Develops opportunities for cranberry farming in Michigan;
- Requires the state to work with the Army

Corps of Engineers to avoid permit duplication;

- Establishes a wetlands advisory council; and
- Includes a role for the conservation districts and local units of government.

The reforms are supported by the Michigan Chamber of Commerce, Michigan Manufacturers Association, Michigan Farm Bureau, Michigan Home Builders, Michigan United Conservation Clubs, Consumers Energy, and Michigan Association of Conservation Districts.



Salute honors local seniors

The 2nd Annual Southeast Oakland County Senior Salute was a huge success! Nearly 800 area seniors showed up for a free consumer/health fair that included a lunch sponsored by Ponderosa Steakhouse, hundreds of dollars worth of prizes, games and live entertainment. Hosted by Sen. Pappageorge and sponsored by Premier Visiting Nurse and American House Senior Living Residences, the Salute was a great way to honor local seniors.



Ready for winter driving?

The Michigan Department of Transportation reminds motorists of the following:

- Always wear your safety belt and be sure children are properly buckled up.
- Don't text or talk on your cell phone while you are driving.
- Slow down when visibility is low or when road conditions are snowy or icy.
- Accelerate and brake slowly and avoid abrupt steering maneuvers.
- Don't pump anti-lock brakes.
- Snowplow drivers need all the help they can get when it comes to maneuvering large trucks through traffic and along the roadways for the benefit of all of us. Please do your part and "Don't Crowd the Plow."
- Make sure your windshield is clear of ice and snow before you start out.



Check out my web site for legislative updates, helpful resources, upcoming events and more!

www.SenatorJohnPappageorge.com



Questions or Comments?

If you have any questions or comments regarding information in this newsletter, or wish to be removed from or added to the mailing list, please contact my office at the following information:

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